

Bruges and Oudenarde, were on the side of the enemy, and, secondly, that they had no central authority to hold them together except the hegemony of Ghent. At first, indeed, the great city fought almost single-handed. In this early stage of the war, which lasted for about a year, the slain were reckoned at hundreds of thousands, and the country was turned into a desert. The Earl had given his nobles *carte blanche* in Flanders until the war was over, and their cruelties were only equalled by the savagery of the military dictators into whose hands the wealthy citizens of Ghent had surrendered the government of their town. At last the extravagances of these ruffians drove the burghers to elect as their captain a man more worthy of such a post in such a crisis. Philip van Artevelde was the son of Jacob van Artevelde, who had made Ghent a power in Europe. Philip had no credentials except his father's name and memory. He himself had lived \* reserved and austere/ and little was known of him when he was chosen captain. But he had inherited the genius of his family. After a brief period of disaster, he entirely altered the complexion of the war by a bold and lucky rush for Bruges. In May 1382 he took the place by a *coup de main* : the Earl fled for his life, the other towns opened their gates, the nobles emigrated, and the country districts submitted. Philip was master of all Flanders. While every nation in Europe contemplated with amazement this remarkable revolution, and the equally remarkable man who, without experience of public life, was guiding the helm of the strange State, France and England had a particular interest in the event. Flanders was part of France, though the Earl had been practically independent. His son-in-law and heir, the Duke of Burgundy, was uncle and guardian of the young King, Charles the Sixth ; if the power of the Earl in Flanders was now overthrown, the Duke would lose his inheritance ; to secure his future patrimony he brought the power of his nephew to crush the new republic. But the King of France had real interests of his own in Flanders, not merely because the earldom was nominally part of his kingdom, but because Paris and other of his towns had long been **so** mutinous and insolent that the integrity of his